

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 080 180

PS 006 665

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TITLE The Concept of Behavioral Effectiveness in the Classroom.  
INSTITUTION Hahnemann Medical Coll. and Hospital, Philadelphia, Pa.  
PUB DATE Feb 73  
NOTE 7p.; Paper presented at a symposium during the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (New Orleans, Louisiana, February 25-March 1, 1973)  
EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.65 HC-\$3.29  
DESCRIPTORS Academic Achievement; Behavior Change; Behavior Patterns; \*Classroom Design; Performance Criteria; Response Mode; Speeches; \*Student Behavior; \*Success Factors; \*Teacher Behavior

ABSTRACT

The concept of behavioral effectiveness and why it is important to understand and measure relative to what teachers do and the way classrooms are designed are discussed. Aspects covered include the following: (1) which classroom behaviors relate to learning and how they are organized; (2) the significance of classroom behavior as the first thing that the teacher sees, out of which teacher response may be designed; (3) the possibility that such behaviors reflect response to the total demands of the academic situation, and therefore may be more sensitive to classroom adjustment than achievement or other product measures which may be influenced more by I.Q. and extra-classroom factors. (Author)

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ITEM TITLE: Behavioral Effectiveness of Children in the Classroom; Concept, Application, and Implications for Regular and Head Start-Follow-Through Classrooms

PRESENTATION I: The Concept

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PRESENTATION TOPIC: The Concept of Behavioral Effectiveness in the Classroom

Our research on behavioral effectiveness began some years ago with the assumption that there must be overt behaviors exhibited by each child during his classroom work that reflect his ability to face the intellectual and emotional demands being made upon him. We further hypothesized that such behaviors should relate to and affect academic achievement, and that if we could identify them precisely we might be able to alter them and through this enhance learning. A child's pattern of such behaviors would define his level and type of behavioral effectiveness. Plans to effect these behaviors could become legitimate curriculum concern.

It is immediately important to distinguish this beginning set of assumptions or working hypotheses from those of others interested in the non-cognitive behaviors of children. We did not begin with the assumption that all behaviors of psychiatric significance are relevant to learning. A child with a tic may learn just as well with it as without it. And as we subsequently discovered, for instance, social outgoingness and popularity bear a relationship to academic achievement. We also expected that any

bit of discreet behavior would have significance for learning only when appreciated in the context of other behaviors. Our notion was that the need to and method of modifying overt behavior would probably depend upon the meaning of the behavior, and that understanding meaning requires an appreciation of the total profile of a child's effective and ineffective behaviors. Finally, we felt that any method of identifying overt classroom behavior of relevance to learning must be reliable and incorporateable into the classroom setting, and suggest what the teacher should do.

Our first step, taken about nine years ago, was to talk with groups of experienced teachers of normal and special class elementary age children. We asked them to tell us which overt behaviors they were happy to see in children because to the teacher these behaviors signified a youngster who is learning and benefitting from his classroom experiences. Conversely, we also asked these teachers to describe behaviors which troubled or worried them because they signified a child who is not learning or benefiting from classroom work. Specific test-taking behaviors were of course ignored, as were behaviors specifically indicative of intellectual capacity. We carefully combed the literature to supplement the long list of behaviors accumulated from these meetings. As you might imagine we spent many long hours attempting to undo ambiguities of wording and duplications in meaning.

I won't bore you with the details of what has transpired since this rather modest beginning. Since then, hundreds of teachers have rated thousands of children on these behaviors. We have performed four factor analyses to determine the basic

dimensions of effective classroom behavior, and studied their reliability and relationship to various measures of academic achievement. We have studied these behaviors cross-culturally as well as in both traditional and open classrooms. We have related these behaviors to family and cultural characteristics, developed norms, performed two cluster analyses to identify total behavior profile types, and emerged many a day from dimly lit rooms, blood-shot-eyed from pouring over rather unsexy computer print-outs.

We feel we have been able to identify a number of dimensions of classroom behavior that are basic to learning, irrespective of IQ, and found out a little about how these are patterned. In the few minutes remaining, let me tell you about a few of these dimensions, and about our attempts to identity profiles of these behaviors for each child.

One factor dimension of great interest to us we have called external reliance. This behavior quality is manifest when a child looks to others for direction, relies excessively on the teacher for what to do next, needs carefully spelled out instructions before proceeding on his own, or has difficulty making choices by himself. In all of these behaviors, the youngster seeks outside of himself for guides as to what to do, since he apparently lacks confidence in his own judgment. The more a child behaves this way, the less chance he will benefit from academic settings. Such behaviors are particularly debilitating in classroom settings such as the open or informal classroom, where there is built-in demand that each child function more on his own than is traditional.

Another dimension of interest we have called creative-initiative. A child manifests this when he brings things into class that relate to current topics, talks about things in an interesting fashion, initiates classroom discussion, and introduces personal experiences into class discussion. Through these behaviors, the youngster is demonstrating a personal involvement in learning. He sees what happens outside of school as well as inside his own fantasies and memories as relevant and part of each new learning experience. This makes him an effective learner, actively involved in his educational life.

A third dimension we have labeled impatience. A youngster who scores high on this dimension characteristically jumps into work too quickly before having a defined direction, is often sloppy in his work, and is unwilling to review what he has done. Impatience here means an uncritical surging ahead and resistance to looking back. This quality hurts learning and characterizes many ineffective learners.

A factor of inattentiveness has also emerged as a property of many ineffective learners, especially as inattentive behaviors include indications the child is oblivious to what is going on, or is difficult to reach interpersonally. We have also identified a dimension we label external blame. A youngster manifests this when he complains the teacher does not help him enough or never calls on him, is quick to say the work assigned is too difficult, or in other ways blames external circumstances when things go wrong. Through these behaviors the child reveals his feeling that others

control the learning process and that when things go awry he can do nothing but turn against others or blame his tools.

All together, we have identified 11 such dimensions, and can profile a child on them. Determining whether there are total profile types has become an interesting task for us, and I would like to tell you a little about what we have done. Luckily we had an expert computer-mathematician and a large computer available to us in the task. Put simply, any profile of scores may vary from another on the basis of profile shape, general amplitude of profile, and degree of profile scatter. Two profiles may differ in amplitude, but match perfectly in shape. Two profiles with the same general amplitude of scores may differ widely in shape and scatter, and so forth. On one occasion a computer program was designed to consider only profile shape and nothing else. We were interested only in the relative amounts of each of the 11 effective and uneffective classroom behavior dimensions exhibited by 600 children, and how differently shaped profiles would relate to academic achievement. The computer program created an 11-dimensional space to consider our 11 factors for each child, each child appearing as a dot in this hypothetical 11-dimensional space. If we had only 3 factor scores, I am sure you could picture how children might appear as dots in 3-dimensional space, the distance between dots being the measure of profile similarity. Well, apparently God and certain computer programs can do this for an 11-dimensional space. Our computer print-out consisted of an array of connected dots which told us which

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children had profile shapes like other children, depending upon whatever criteria of degree of similarity we wished to settle on. Almost as soon as the results of this study were published we performed a second cluster analysis, or so it is called, considering both shape of profile and its general amplitude. We are currently in the throws of a third cluster analysis, with added refinements.

We are now convinced that there are profile types, and that these types tell us more about a child than can any one behavior dimension by itself. On a purely mathematical probability basis, it is clear that 11 bits of information, each of which reflects one behavioral effectiveness factor, will together tell you much more than any one factor, just as a factor tells you more than any discreet bit of behavior which alone may mean a number of things.

Let me mention one or two profile types we have noted in our work. One type of child is both highly reliant and also highly inattentive. There is no obstreperousness or impatience, but neither is the child keeping up with what is going on in class. Being reliant is bad enough, but it is deadly when in combination with inattentiveness because with inattentiveness the child has cut himself off from the very sources of external input upon which he must rely. Another type we discovered particularly in the open classroom, and it gave us some insight into how such a setting differs from more traditional ones. This type of child is characterized by very high external reliance and achievement anxiety factor scores. These youngsters suffer from inability to deal with the openness of the classroom, insofar as they are expected

to make more decisions for themselves and work on their own. They look outside for guidelines, find there are fewer than they need in the open setting, and respond with excessive fear of failure and learning difficulty.

And of course we have identified profile types that describe one or another type of obstreperous or difficult-to-manage child. More important however is the fact that some of these children also manifest inability to keep up with classroom work, low creative-initiative and little tendency to approach the teacher with positive feeling, while others do not. The total profiles have very different meanings, and therefore call for different strategies of teacher response.

And since it is nice to end on a positive note, we have discovered that a significant number of children in all grades and settings exhibit a pattern of very effective behaviors. This does not mean that they are saints by any means, nor does this fact suggest that everything is rosy in the little-ol' red school-house. It does suggest, however, that there is a characteristic set of overt behaviors which accompany academic success, that these can serve as goals for education as reasonably as may the learning of any academic curriculum content, and that an appreciation of these behaviors should lead to ways teachers may react which will abet learning.